



Nedlands Primary School

EXPERIENCE THE OPPORTUNITIES

SMS Attendance System Unexplained Daily Absences and Late Arrivals

INFORMATION PACK

Nedlands PS will be implementing a new system that will use mobile phone Short Message Service (SMS) to send text messages to parents/guardians/caregivers to notify them of an unexplained absence or late arrival of their child. SMS is already used by the school to provide some information to parents, such as school community notices and emergency/unplanned events.

From Monday 12 June, parents will be informed by mobile phone SMS each time their child is absent when an explanation has not already been provided to the school. If your child is absent and a reason has been provided before the time the SMS is due to be sent, you will not receive a text message.

This system will **not** be used for students attending Nedlands Park Early Learning Centre, only students attending the main campus of Nedlands PS (PP – Yr 6).

Please note that SMS can only be used to notify Nedlands PS of unexpected, short term absences, such as illness or a medical appointment. Longer absences for reasons such as travel or cultural reasons must still be communicated in writing, as these must be authorised by the Principal. Once approval for these absences has been given, absences will be pre-recorded in our attendance system so that an unexplained absence SMS is not received each day your child is away.

In order to ensure accuracy of attendance data, it is essential that ALL students arriving at school after **8:45am** go to the office for a Late Slip. This will ensure that the attendance record for your child has been amended to ensure you do not receive an unnecessary SMS message. All students arriving at classes after **8:45am** without a Late Slip will be sent to the office for one, allowing teachers to focus on the important task of teaching. This allows your child's attendance to be recorded so that you do not receive an unexplained absence SMS.

Prior to our start date, a SMS message will be sent to all numbers listed, prompting you to save the number in your CONTACTS list as NEDLANDS ABSENCES. This will ensure that you are able to access the number easily to notify us of a student absence.

For reference, the number to send SMS to regarding daily absences is 0437 287 006. This number can only receive SMS, not voice calls.

Please read through this information pack carefully to familiarise yourself with the new system. All SMS communications are sent by default to Parent / Guardian 1 in our database. This pack contains a form to allow you to change the person listed as Parent / Guardian 1. Please note that the person nominated to receive SMS absence notifications, will also receive any other SMS sent by the school. Thank you for understanding that we are not permitted to change a student's record without permission from a Parent / Guardian.

Nedlands PS is introducing the SMS Absence System as a service to the community to build on existing attendance procedures and to ensure that parents are notified as soon as possible if their child is absent from school without an explanation. This system has been shown to assist in making schools (and parents) more aware of where students are and improving student attendance. These factors will enhance learning opportunities for all students and contribute to their safety.

Julie Simpfendorfer and Sandy Cottam
Deputy Principals

6 June, 2017

Advantages of using SMS to communicate school absence to parents

- **Faster Communication**

By using SMS we can get important messages to parents faster and can send a message to one or more people instantly. Parents can also use this system to notify the school in advance of some absences to avoid receiving a text message. SMS can be sent to the school 24/7, however please note that staff need to be onsite to receive messages and may not respond out of school hours.

- **Cost effective**

SMS communication to parents will be less expensive for the school than written or telephone communication. SMS also represents a cost effective and quick method for parents to notify the school for some types of absence. The requirement for the school to issue absentee follow-up letters will also decrease.

- **Emergency Message**

If there is an emergency situation that requires rapid communication to parents this can be achieved using SMS.

- **Peace of Mind**

If your children make their way to school independently, this system will provide some peace of mind regarding their attendance.

Frequently asked questions about SMS communications

When will Nedlands PS begin using the SMS Attendance System?

Monday 12 June is the first day that Nedlands PS will send SMS notification of absences.

As a parent, what do I need to do?

- Starting on Monday 12 June, if you know your child is going to be absent on any day, please SMS the school before 9.45 am regarding the absence. If you do not contact the school, the SMS system will automatically send you a text message advising you that your child is not at school.
- If you do not wish to receive SMS communication regarding student unexplained absences, please contact the school to discuss other options for receiving this information.

What information do I include in the SMS when I know my child will be absent from school?

The SMS **MUST** contain child's name, the date of the absence, and the reason for the absence. See below for additional information about absence reasons, as not all absences can be accounted for using SMS.

If I receive an SMS about my child being absent, how do I reply?

When you receive an SMS about an absence, reply to the number and make sure that the text includes the student name, date of absence and reason for absence. Do not call the number as it is an automated system using a virtual number.

Sample SMS Reply Message:

Jane Citizen, 11 Feb, Sick

Why do I need to give the reason for the absence?

Schools must fulfill their legal obligations in relation to student attendance. All student absences must have a reason recorded. If no reason is given, or the reason given in the SMS does not allow us to meet our obligations, we will need to contact you for this information.

What will it cost me?

Standard SMS charges apply, depending on your mobile phone carrier and plan. The cost of an SMS is usually cheaper than a local telephone call.

What if my mobile number changes?

Please notify the school *immediately* if your mobile number changes.

Why don't I need to include my name?

The SMS system is linked to our student records and identifies the person sending the message.

Can my friend send the SMS to inform the school of an absence?

The SMS **must** be received from one of the student's parents / guardian contacts listed on our records. This is a legal requirement.

My Child attends Nedlands Park Early Learning Centre, will I be affected?

No, this system is **not** being used for students attending Nedlands Park Early Learning Centre

My child attends Pre-Primary at Nedlands PS, will I be affected?

Yes, this SMS absence system will be used for Pre-Primary students at the Nedlands PS site. Parents will need to get a late slip for all students arriving after 8.45am.

What if I don't have a mobile phone but I still want to receive messages about my child?

Contact the school to discuss the available options for receiving messages.

What if I decide that I don't want to receive the SMS messages?

Contact the school. A form will need to be completed to have your details removed from the SMS Messaging system. If SMS messages won't be sent, a reliable alternative method of contact needs to be established.

What if there is a custodial order preventing contact?

The parent/guardian with legal custody of the child must provide evidence to the school in the form of a court order for the school to legally deny a parent/guardian access to any information about their child.

Our child spends time with each parent, so we both want to receive the SMS notifications – is this possible?

We can arrange for both parents to receive the SMS notifications. Please contact the school with the child's name and the mobile phone numbers of both parents.

Can I notify you using SMS that we are travelling?

No. SMS can only be used to notify us of short term, unexpected absences, such as illness or medical appointments. Longer term and prior notification of absences must still be completed in writing, which allows Nedlands PS to meet their legal obligations.

My child is quite sick and I have a medical certificate for 1 week. Can I still use the SMS attendance system to notify you of this?

Absences of 1 week or more require notification in writing, along with the provision of the medical certificate. This allows Nedlands PS to meet their legal obligations. Once notification has been received it will be entered into our attendance system to prevent you receiving unnecessary SMS messages.

What are the requirements for notification of student absences?

It is a legal requirement that parents contact the school regarding any student absences or reasons for lateness. If an explanation for the absence has been provided prior to 9.45am each morning, then parents will not receive an SMS.

Parents need to be aware that this system is an additional absence follow up service only. There will be times when parents may not receive a text message due to technical issues. In cases where you are concerned about your child's attendance, please contact the school directly on 9386 2278.

If you have any other questions regarding the SMS Absence System for Nedlands PS, please call Julie Simpfendorfer on 9386 2278 for more information.